

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 185

SP 026 715

AUTHOR Allain, Violet Anselmini
TITLE Career Stages of Teachers: Implications for Professional Development.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (69th, Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Development; Decision Making; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Professional Development; *Teaching (Occupation); Vocational Maturity

ABSTRACT

There is a trend to bring professional development of teachers, whether it be graduate college courses, district held workshops, or some other in-service programs, under closer scrutiny. This is a partial response to demands for accountability and the problems inherent with the "greying" of the teacher workforce. A growing body of research indicates that a teaching career has structure whereby teachers reflect different behaviors, knowledge, job skills, attitudes, and concerns at different points in their careers. The career of a teacher often follows a regular developmental pattern. Some of these research studies have revealed year phases which seem related to each teacher's development. Special attention needs to be given to the stages of a teaching career and how these levels can impact upon the type of professional development which will be most relevant to teachers. Three models for professional development are offered: the support model, the decision-making model, and the study model. (Author/JD)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED264185

CAREER STAGES OF TEACHERS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Violet Anselmini Allain
Department of Educational Resources
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

V. Allain

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

Presented at the American Educational Research Association

April 1985

2

SP 0266715

INTRODUCTION

Estimates on the cost of professional development for the nation's 2.1 million teachers vary from \$315 million to \$2 billion per year. (Toch, 1982a, p. 10) Whatever the cost may be, there is a trend to bring professional development, whether it be graduate college courses, district held workshops, or some other inservice program, under closer scrutiny. This trend is a partial response to demands for accountability and the problems inherent with the "graying" of the teaching profession.

What this paper seeks to accomplish is to approach professional development from the perspective of career development. Special attention will be given to the stages of a teaching career and how they can be a critical factor when determining the type of professional development which will be most relevant to teachers.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES IN TEACHING

The process of becoming a teacher and continuing to stay one is a complex matter. The familiarity with teaching by those who wish to enter the field can be deceptive. Many believe that through their experience as students, they have an accurate notion of the scope and depth of the teaching role. Eddy (1969) has pointed out that the training of teachers for their formal role begins long before courses in education are taken. Lortie (1975), Cooper and Ryan (1980), and Goodlad (1983) have noted that prospective teachers have been watching

their own teachers for at least sixteen years and have developed attitudes and patterned techniques after them. While socialization to the teaching profession does begin with students' early experiences, most of their perceptions of the teacher's role are incomplete.

Lortie (1975) claims that teaching is primarily an unstaged occupation. This description may be accurate in the sense that the occupation of teaching lacks a professional ladder where, through a series of promotions, individuals can gain status and recognition. (Currently there exists a few isolated examples where this is changing, e.g., in North Carolina and Tennessee.) Nonetheless, some researchers would counter Lortie and contend that stages do exist in teaching, at least from a developmental perspective. They take their cue from contemporary psychologists who describe the stages of adulthood and they apply those concepts to teachers at various levels of development. This perspective would discount the notion of the sameness of the teaching profession over the decades.

Eddy (1969) describes the change from a preservice teacher to an inservice one as difficult. She uses vanGennep's anthropological concept of rites of passage to draw the analogy between this change and other ritualized practices in society. VanGennep identifies three components in a rite of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation. The transition phase is the most difficult and this phase can be seen when one first enters the teaching field. There are abrupt changes in relationships with others that mark the transition from student to teacher. While it is true that most new teachers are in the same general environment that they were in as students, they often find that they experience a poor induction into the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

professional career. They must now carry on the function of the teacher, a superordinate role, which requires that they socialize pupils for subordinate roles.

In her study of new teachers, Eddy (1969) found them to experience a great deal of uneasiness during the transitional period. This phase eventually passed as the novice teacher became more accustomed with his/her role. But change does not discontinue. Burden (1980) noted:

Information about human development, career development, teacher characteristics, the occupation of teaching, and teachers' career development indicates the likelihood of significant teacher change during the teaching years. Yet surprisingly little is known about specific changes teachers might undergo during their careers. (p. 2)

While vanGennep's model is helpful in understanding the difficult transition first-year teachers make from the role of the student to that of the teacher, it has been noted that transitions also exist within one's teaching career. Newman (1980) observed that there appear to be four major transitions in a teaching career: the first year, approximately the tenth year, approximately the twentieth year, and retirement. To some extent these stages reflect the psychological interpretation of adult development. Newman contends that although much has been written regarding the stressful nature of teaching, it has not always been recognized that stress is an inherent factor in the natural course of personal and professional development. (p.2) In other words, the stress that one encounters as a teacher is not exclusively due to the nature of the job, but can be partially explained through the developmental processes one experiences as an adult. Burden's study (1980) of fifteen elementary school practitioners described different characteristics during identifiable

periods in their careers.

The changes seemed to occur in an ordered, hierarchical sequence with each new year characterized by different types of change. The changes occurred gradually and were cumulative. (p. 14)

This study revealed year phases which seemed related to each teacher's development. Although there was some variation, Burden delineated three stages which seemed to display distinct characteristics: the first year; the second, third, and fourth years; and, the fifth year and beyond.

Fuller (1969) conceptualized a three-phase developmental theory of teachers' concerns. Fuller posited a pre-teaching phase of non-concern, a middle phase of concern with self and survival, and a later phase of concern with impact on students. Fuller and Brown (1975) later refined this initial conceptualization, citing three stages of concern clusters. The first stage focuses on survival as a teacher, class control, being liked by students, supervisors' opinions, being observed, evaluated, and praised, and on fear of failure. The second stage is described as the mastery state and deals with concerns about mastering the teaching tasks - working with too many students, time pressures, lack of instructional materials, etc. The focus of the third stage is impact: concerns regarding the recognition of social and emotional needs of pupils, fairness, tailoring content to individual students, etc. (Patoniczek and Isaacson, 1981)

From the above we can see a growing body of research which indicates a teaching career has structure whereby teachers reflect different behaviors, knowledge, job skills, attitudes, and concerns at different points in their careers. As Newman notes:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that a teaching career is not one great plateau, but a varied terrain with many possible paths and a few shared thickets, swamps, mountains and meadows. (1980, p. 3)

The career of a teacher often follows a regular developmental pattern. The behaviors and attitudes of first-year teachers reflect a unique stage and will be explored in the following section. Currently, there is little agreement about the demarcation of definite stages of development in a teaching career after the first year. Because of this, the category of experienced teachers will be dealt with in its entirety although some attempt will be made to highlight stages within it.

First-Year Teachers. As previously cited, most studies support the generalization that beginning teachers' principle concerns would be classified as concerns with self. Fuller (1969) notes that among other concerns, beginning teachers are anxious about their own content preparation, evaluations by supervisors, and classroom control. (p. 210) Burden (1980, 1982) and Ryan, et al. (1977, 1980) support this contention and deal more specifically with the problems of first-year teachers as they confront the discrepancy between the prescribed and public roles of teachers.

The Ryan, et al. studies cited above examined eighteen first-year teachers of grades K-12 through observations, interviews, and written questionnaires over a period of four months. The researchers' purpose was to "describe the life-space of the first-year teacher." Throughout the study the point was made that when first-year teachers experienced difficulty in their new role - with

all the concomitant situations, responsibilities, and relationships - it frequently was due to the struggle of bridging the gap between expectation and reality.

Again we find in this study that reports of first-year teachers indicated that the self was a major source of concern.

The FYT (first-year teacher) may worry about his/her own competence in teaching a particular subject, in managing a classroom, in confronting discipline problems, in evaluating student progress, and so on. (1977, p. 19)

In connection with the above, the analysis of the data suggests a trend among the subjects toward a greater recognition of the "complexity of their interpersonal or managerial relationships with students". (1977, p. 6)

The change in attitude toward self and students is especially apparent during the first year of teaching. Ryan, et al. (1980) states that these attitudes become "...depending on one's point of view, more negative or more realistic". (p. 12)

In terms of career plans, the Ryan, et al. studies found that beginning teachers remained somewhat non-committal, reinforcing Lortie's (1975) claim that easy access to teacher education programs indicates a low level of commitment. The first-year teacher study reported that one-half of the eighteen subjects projected themselves in classroom teaching five years or more while nine of the first-year teachers studied expressed the possibility of moving into another field that might not be related to teaching. (1977, pp. 23-24)

Burden (1980, 1982) also reinforces the notion of the transition shock that new practitioners experience when they confront the reality of the job during their first year.

The teachers recalled their first teaching year as a time

of concern about themselves in relation to their professional responsibilities. They were primarily concerned about their adequacy in: (1) maintaining classroom control, (2) teaching the subject, and (3) improving their teaching skills...Many teachers expressed feelings of inadequacy in each area and consequently were concerned about their success as a teacher. (p. 21)

Burden's study of fifteen elementary teachers also revealed a number of professional characteristics they exhibited the first year which were distinct from those in subsequent years. In their initial year of teaching, these individuals adhered to a previously formed image of teachers and teaching, and taught in a traditional manner. In addition, they often experienced feelings of uncertainty, confusion, and insecurity.

The above research seems to indicate that first-year teachers have special concerns and distinctive characteristics which set them apart from the more experienced teacher. This particular time in the career of a teacher is distinct because it presents a set of unique conditions and experiences for the teacher.

Experienced Teachers. In studies of experienced teachers, we find that there is a lessening of concern about self and more of a concern regarding students and others. Fuller (1969) observed:

When concerns are "mature", i.e., characteristic of experienced superior teachers, concerns seem to focus on pupil gain and self evaluations by others. The specific concerns we have observed are concerns about ability to understand pupils' capacities, to specify objectives for them, to assess their gain,...and to evaluate oneself in terms of pupil gain. (p. 221)

In Burden's study (1980) the professional characteristics of teachers who had been teaching for five or more years differed significantly from those of first-year teachers. This is especially

apparent when the perceptions of the teacher role is explored. By the time teachers gained experience, it seems they discovered what worked for them in the classroom and eventually abandoned the image of a teacher they thought they had to fulfill. In the first years, they held an image of what a teacher should be and conformed to that image. Gradually they let their own personality be a determining factor and discarded the prescribed role.

Newman, in her research of middle-aged and older teachers (1980, 1981), identified specific characteristics of these groups. For instance, the tenth year transition period is usually spent by the teacher "...confronting and resolving questions of whether and where to remain in teaching." (1980, p. 11) Teachers in their early fifties with approximately thirty years of experience are beginning to grapple with the questions surrounding retirement. When to retire, will he/she be happy, and will he/she have enough to do are concerns with which individuals in this stage of teaching must deal. It's not unusual for these teachers, as well as others in this same age group, to give a lot of thought to evaluating their lives in terms of whether or not they had met their goals. The concern about the degree of fulfillment of one's life occupies these teachers. Newman states:

These teachers are at a crossroads in their personal and professional lives. They are faced with the difficult decision of when to retire, and as they contemplate the decision, they reflect deeply on the changes they have experienced and try to give a positive evaluation of their careers. (1981, p. 1)

Many of them in the Newman study felt a definite loss of prestige in their profession, which in turn has made the job less rewarding. They recognized the value changes over the last thirty years and perceived a sense of loss.

Another prominent distinction between novice and experienced teachers is in the area of career plans. In the Ryan, et al. studies (1977, 1980) of first-year teachers about one-third of the subjects committed themselves to classroom teaching for five years or more. Burden's research with experienced practitioners showed that these individuals were generally more committed to continue teaching as compared to when they began teaching.

The above seems to indicate that over the span of one's teaching career there are discrete stages which are characterized by distinct features. We can gain some compelling insights into the kind of professional development that will be most relevant and worthwhile for teachers when the above is taken into consideration.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The need to recruit and retain able teachers has been well documented. (Sykes, 1983; Schlechty and Vance, 1983) Generally it's understood that schools must provide environments that are attractive to these teachers, but in reality fail to do so. In fact, Schlechty and Vance (1983) claim that schools are not organized to retain the services of academically able individuals after they are recruited. Those who study this problem believe the situation would be partially alleviated by providing opportunities for career and professional development. Chapman states:

The greater a teacher's involvement in the professional aspect of his or her career..., the more likely that teacher will remain employed. (1983, p. 45)

In addition, Sykes (1983) contends that the aging, tenured teacher

workforce is very difficult to motivate. By the time teachers reach their 30s and 40s, salary incentives are gone and staff morale, due largely to burn out, is low. He concludes by stating, "This is the the most serious problem facing educational management in the 80s." (p. 27)

From the above, it appears that some form of revitalization is needed, but how can this be accomplished? Currently there is a growing number of scholars who contend that any kind of revitalizing activity should use the insights we have about stages of career development of teachers as a point of departure. To this end, three models will be suggested: the support model, the decision-making model, and the study model.

Support Model. This model recognizes that teachers at different stages in their careers have different pressures and there should be some support, either from a group or an individual, available. The school life of the classroom teacher can be isolating, and this model would provide some structure to help facilitate communication among teachers. For instance, if an experienced teacher is assigned to be available to a first-year teacher, this "mentor" would hopefully help the novice overcome his/her insecurity and ease the transition process. Krupp and Dempsey (1982) point out that older teachers also experience times of deep questioning and inner turmoil in the search for identity. They note that:

It is during these transitions that teachers not only profit from but also need an understanding ear, choices that permit them to explore options, and, perhaps, even counseling into a different grade, related subject, or out of teaching altogether. (p. 219)

There are very few examples where schools or school districts provide the framework for this support model. In addition, it would be extremely helpful for schools to make counselors/psychologists available to teachers who require more professional attention. The support model stresses a preventative perspective in dealing with concerns of one's career.

Decision-Making Model. This model seeks to use the information we have about teachers' career development and use it to plan inservice programs. Krupp and Dempsey (1982) urge administrators to:

Read recent literature in such areas as adult development changes so you will be aware of basic needs which often exist at different ages, teaching satisfiers and dissatisfiers, and life stresses. Use the material as a guide when dealing with teachers. (p. 220)

An important aspect of this model is to approach the teachers for ideas about inservice topics. Based on what we know about career development, we can conclude that some teachers will be interested in particular topics while others will not. For instance, beginning teachers would usually benefit from workshops dealing with content preparation, classroom management techniques, the production of instructional materials, and coming to grips with the conflict of their notion of the prescribed teacher role versus their perceptions of reality. At this stage the inservice approach should be more supervisory in helping the novice teacher with the practicalities of the classroom. On the other hand, it would seem that the more experienced teachers would prefer to participate in sessions covering methods of evaluating students, up-dating their instructional

strategies, and inservice training that encourages their "...capacity for analysis and independent thought." (Christensen, et al., 1983, p. 9) Mature teachers seem to gain little from the more traditional inservice activities and appear to benefit from programs which they have organized and directed. Some older teachers prefer to become familiar with topics like financial and retirement planning. An example of this can be seen in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district which has offered a "Pre-Retirement Training for Teachers" class. (Toch, 1982b, p. 14)

This differential perspective toward inservice programs has been observed by Christensen, et al. :

For beginning teachers, researchers generally prescribe a relatively structured inservice program emphasizing clear explanation of what is expected of teachers. Mid-career educators may be best served by programs that encourage inquiry and exploration while addressing common mid-life problems such as alcoholism and depression. Finally, for teachers in late career stages, some experts recommend nondirective inservice programs, developed and organized by participating teachers. (1983, p. 11)

It would be a mistake to assume that simply because teachers are located in the same school or teach the same grade or subject that they are all interested in the same inservice topics. For this reason, it is crucial that the teachers themselves participate in the decision-making process of planning workshops and inservice experiences.

Study Model. This model directly addresses the nature of career development by studying its various stages. The course, Teacher Career Development, was created by Katherine K. Newman at the University of Houston to accomplish this goal. Although this was a

graduate course, the content could be modified to fit into an extended inservice program. This course was designed to give an opportunity for teachers to examine their careers and the decisions involved in their turning points. The activities included writing two professional autobiographies (one at the beginning of the course, another at the end), reading works on adult development, e.g., Gould's Transformations (1978) and Levinson's Seasons of a Man's Life, discussing the occupational characteristics of teaching as researched by Dreeban in The Nature of Teaching (1970) and Lortie in Schoolteacher (1975), exploring the stages in a teaching career through such works as Ryan, et al. 's Biting the Apple, (1980) and conducting teacher interviews. (Newman, 1980, pp. 6-7) The study model would provide teachers with insights into their career development and an opportunity to anticipate the transitions that lie ahead.

The above models suggest some direction that professional development can take in helping to revitalize the teaching profession. The important consideration in planning programs for teachers is recognizing the impact of the developmental stages of a teaching career and addressing the particular concerns at the different levels.

REFERENCES

- Burden, Paul R., Interviews With Experienced Teachers: A Reality Base for Preservice Teachers. Manhattan, Kansas: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 1982, ED 218 261.
- _____, Teachers' Perceptions of the Characteristics and Influence on Their Personal and Professional Development. Manhattan, Kansas: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 1980, ED 198 087.
- Chapman, David W., "A Model of the Influences on Teacher Retention." Journal of Teacher Education, September-October 1983, 34 (5), pp. 43-49.
- Christensen, Judith, Peter Burke, Ralph Fessler, and David Hagstrom, Stages of Teachers' Careers—Implications for Staff Development. Washington: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, 1983.
- Eddy, Elizabeth M., Becoming a Teacher. New York: Teachers College Press, 1969.
- Fuller, Frances F. and O. H. Brown, "Becoming a Teacher" in Kevin Ryan (ed.) Teacher Education, Part II. The 14th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1975.
- Goodlad, John, "A Study of Schooling: Some Findings and Hypotheses," Phi Delta Kappan, 1983, 64 (7), pp. 465-70.
- Krupp, Judy-Arien and Richard A. Dempsey, "The Graying of the Faculty." Clearing House, January 1982, 55 (5), pp. 218-20.
- Lortie, Dan C., Schoolteacher. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Newman, Katherine K., Beverly Domburg, Dion Dubois, and Elizabeth Kranz, Stress in Teachers' Midcareer Transitions: A Role for Teacher Education. ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 196 868, 1980.
- Newman, Katherine K., "What's on Older Teachers' Minds?" Principal, March 1981.
- Patoniczek, Dennis and Nancy Sigler Issacson, "The Relationship of Socialization and Concerns of Beginning Secondary Teachers." Journal of Teacher Education, 1981, 32 (3/May-June), pp. 14-17.
- Ryan, Kevin, Jane H. Applegate, V. Randall Flora, John M. Johnston, Thomas J. Lasley, Gerald M. Mager, and Katherine K. Newman, Biting The Apple: Accounts of First-Year Teachers. New York: Longman Inc., 1980.
- _____, The First-Year Teacher Study. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, April 1977.
- Ryan, Kevin and James M. Cooper, Those Who Can, Teach (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Schlechty, Phillip C. and Victor S. Vance, "Recruitment, Selection, and Retention: The Shape of the Teaching Force." Elementary School Journal, March 1983, 83 (4), pp. 469-87.

Sykes, Gary, "Teacher Preparation and the Teacher Workforce: Problems and Prospects for the 80's." American Education, March 1983, 19 (2), pp. 23-30.

Toch, Thomas, "America's Teachers: The Need for Renewal." Education Week. September 29, 1982a, pp. 10-11.

_____, "America's Teachers: The Need for Renewal." Education Week. October 6, 1982b, pp. 12-14.